are going to propose ten lakh passenger landing in a particular year. Last year, it was 2.4 lakh passenger landing. But it is all at the infant stage. However, the suggestion made by the hon. Member will be definitely taken into consideration.

*607. [*The questioners (Shri Rahul Bajaj and Shri Raj Kumar Dhoot) were absent. For answer vide page 47.*]

Women deserted by NRI husbands

*608. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any action has been taken by Government to redress the plight of Indian women deserted by their NRI husbands;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) The Ministry has recently initiated various measures to create awareness on this issue. An awareness/publicity campaign to make people aware of such issues has been launched by way of publication of guidance booklet, distribution of multi-lingual pamphlets, seminars and scrolls on TV etc. Two workshops, one each at Chandigarh and Thiruvananthapuram, have been held in collaboration with the National Commission for Women to inform the public about the precautions to be taken and the issues involved in marriages with NRI men. A National Consultation on NRI marriages was also organized in Delhi by the Ministry involving State Governments, representatives from police, embassies, NGOs and the judiciary etc. to sensitize the public on the issue. The Ministry has also introduced a scheme to provide legal/counseling services to Indian women deserted by their overseas Indian spouses through Indian Missions abroad. This scheme covers cases pertaining to the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Gulf. The Ministry has also set up a Gender Advisory Group to look into the issues concerning women married to NRI

husbands. The representations received in the Ministry are referred to the State Governments/Indian Missions concerned, for taking appropriate action in the matter.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, this is a very, very serious issue and just to give you an example, in one State alone, the State of Punjab, there are 30,000 complaints of women who have been duped in these NRI marriages and 15,000 cases have been registered just in one State. So, Sir, it is a very serious issue affecting the status of women.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him reply. The time is short.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: So, Sir, my first supplementary is, because of the legal problems involved, the NCW has recommended signing the Hague Convention and specific protocols dealing with this issue. Is the Government prepared to sign the Hague Convention?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, we have already had a conference along with various NGOs and the Indian Society on Private International Law, and the Government has already decided to sign the Hague Convention. This has been taken up and the Ministry of External Affairs is on the move. It may be done at the earliest.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, I thank you very much for that answer. I have got a second supplementary too. This is a very good step that you are about to take and I want to congratulate you for that. There is also a recommendation, from the experience of those involved, that you require special cells in all those embassies where there are such affected populations. Are you going to set up those cells?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, this is also an initiative taken by the MEA and my Ministry. There is a proposal to have some gender cells. In our Ministry also we have created a gender cell. Its first meeting is over. They have made some important recommendations too which are under consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over. Papers to be laid.